



An Old Quarrel.

BY FRANCES COURtenay BAYLOR.



T was one morning this last April that a blue-bird lit on my windowsill,—a *blue*-bird, not a *new* bird, understand, for we are very old friends.

He has been a neighbor of mine for years,—a part, at least, of every year for a decade,—and comes to Twig Lodge, every spring, as regularly as possible.

“Well, friend, how are you? Welcome to Virginia again! When did you leave the South?” I said in greeting, but had no answer; for a moment, indeed, was thinking him rude and surly for a traveled bird, when he cocked his head to one side, as if listening, and, looking down, said: “There they are! At it again! They have been quarreling in just this way, now, ever since anything was anywhere. There’s a regular feud between them. Hark!”

“Between who?” said I, curiously, regardless of grammar.

“Between *them*,” replied he, impatiently. “They are all alike. Hark! Don’t you see that snow-flake down below, and that blade of grass?”

“Where are you going? I don’t hear anything,” said I. But he was off, and I was about to leave the window when I was arrested by the sound of voices, very fine and clear, and apparently at some distance from me. I stopped and listened; I was so taken by surprise and so interested that I quite forgot that one should never listen to con-

versations not intended for one. I did n’t remember ever to have heard I must n’t listen, for fully a week, and this was the dialogue:

Snow-Flake: “Well, the season is over, thank goodness, and we shall all be off very soon.” I am so glad!

Blade of Grass: “The season *over*. Why, what are you talking about? It has just begun.”

S. F.: “That shows what you know of times and seasons! But I don’t know why I should express the least surprise, when you don’t know anything about Christmas even, nor do any of your family. I never knew such ignorance. We’ve told you the story over and over again; but some persons never learn anything.”

B.O.F.G.: “Oh, yes! You’ve told us stories enough and to spare. *That*, I am quite willing to grant. But when it comes to the truth! —that is quite another matter. Christmas! Christmas! Christmas! It is always Christmas with you the whole year around, and I am perfectly sick and tired of hearing of it, for it is really yourself that you wish to bring into notice all the time. If you could only hear one-half of the disagreeable things that are said of you, you would certainly be a good deal less openly conceited. Wherever I go it is always the same thing. Thank Heaven, the snow is gone at last! That dirty, slushy, wretched snow! How I hate it!”

S. F.: “What an abominable fib! Wherever I go I hear nothing but good of myself and my family! ‘Ah! Here’s the snow at last! Now we are all right! Now we shall have some fun! Ho!

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for coasting and skating and sleighing, and larks generally,' they say. And as for being *dirty*, we are the purest, whitest, most beautiful thing in all this white world."

B. OF G.: "The world is n't white at all. It is *green*. I have told you that a thousand times at least. I have been all over it, and I know."

S. F.: "It is white, all white, except where the sun strikes it in the evening. I should think I ought to know."

B. OF G.: "You ought to know many things that you don't know, and never will, moreover. I can tell you that there are whole countries where nobody has ever seen or heard of you, and where we have lived and flourished for thousands of years."

S. F.: "And I can tell you that there are other countries where not so many as one of you has ever been seen, and where we have lived and flourished the year round for millions of years."

B. OF G.: "Oh! Pooh! Tell that to the marines! What is the name of those countries, pray? Where did your family come from, anyway, I should like to know!"

S. F.: "My family is of high origin — far, far above yours, as everybody knows; for though you are a most impudent young blade, your low origin is a thing that you can never, never alter. Grow as you will, you will never rise to the height I came from, I can tell you."

B. OF G.: "Well, I would rather strive upward than to be always falling into the mire, if that is what you mean. You are like poor Rain-drop, who can't keep out of the gutter to save his life, and is always talking of having 'left heaven so recently.' Earth is good enough for me; and I flatter myself that it would n't be much of a place for anybody, but for us."

S. F.: "Well, your conceit is something colossal. It gets along perfectly, I can assure you, without you or yours, for all you think yourself so important. Who is it that puffs you up with such ideas? You are green to believe them. Where were you on the 25th of last December, pray?"

B. OF G.: "Where *you* will be on the 4th of July next, — precisely!"

S. F.: "The dog-days! Everybody that is anybody always *would* make a point of escaping them. They are only fit, as the Turks say, for mad dogs and Englishmen — and you."

B. OF G.: "They are too good for such as *you*, certainly."

S. F.: "Look here! Don't you go too far! Just you remember that I can call on my family and we can kill you all out, whenever we choose to act in concert — freeze you right out! Yes, kill and bury you, one and all, and tell no tales."

B. OF G.: "Oh! no! You can't, either. At worst you could only stun us for a while. Kill us you never can, nor conquer us, either; you have been trying to, ever since the world was made; and look at you, you poor miserable thing, dying by inches, like all your family, on this 5th of April, 1889! and no nearer doing it than in the year one I. The less you talk about fighting us the better. We can put a million billion spears in the field in three weeks without making the least commotion, and sustain them for months without troubling anybody to lend us a cent. You had better be civil, I can tell you — for you are almost alone, and we are Legion. Besides, whenever any of you are attacked by enemies you always run away! You know you do. Run away now, and join the rest of your family. It will be better for you, and we would be ashamed to tackle you — quite ashamed, I assure you."

S. F. (bursting into tears of rage): "I go, but it is because I promised to, six months ago, and not because of anything *you* have said or can do."

B. OF G.: "Was it furious, perfectly furious? Hold on a bit, and we'll all sing 'The Wearing of the Green' for you. That always puts you in a melting mood, icy as you are in general. It is so pathetic. Hold on, I say."

S. F. (indignantly): "I will not hold on. I am going, going, gone! But I will come again. Au revoir, monsieur, until the 15th of November."

